

I oppose media concentration!

1 June, 2003

Dear Chairman Powell:

We are writing to insist that Congress and the public have a full opportunity to review and comment on any specific changes that the Commission intends to make in the biennial review of media ownership rules before such rules are issued in final form.

We write to you today to emphasize that the period of consolidation following the Telecommunications Act of 1996 has had far-reaching negative repercussions on the ability of musicians to gain access to the public airwaves and to make a living.

We are also cautious and extremely concerned as American citizens that increased concentration of media ownership will have a negative impact on access to diverse viewpoints and will impede the functioning of our democracy.

We understand that a ruling by the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit has required the FCC to show empirical evidence that the rules are necessary, or they must be revoked.

We believe there is ample empirical evidence that these rules are necessary and, more importantly, overwhelming proof that the public would like the limits to be held in place.

We cite as empirical evidence the following studies:

Radio Deregulation: Has It Served Citizens and Musicians?

<http://www.futureofmusic.org/research/radiostudy.cfm>

In November 2002, the Future of Music Coalition released a well-researched and data-driven study of the effects of radio consolidation on citizens and musicians. This 150-page document presents compelling evidence that radio consolidation has resulted in:

- 1) Reduced marketplace competition
- 2) Reduced programming diversity and the homogenization of playlists
- 3) Reduced public access to the airwaves for local programming
- 4) Reduced public satisfaction with listening options

Democracy Unhinged: More Media Concentration Means Less Public Discourse

http://www.dpeaflcio.org/pdf/FCC_Critique.pdf

In December 2002, the Center for Economic and Policy Research and the Department for Professional Employees/AFL-CIO released a critique of the twelve FCC studies which, according to an FCC press release, purported to have examined the current state of the media market place. The Center for Economic and Policy Research used the same data sets to raise serious

questions about the impact of concentration to date on diversity of news and entertainment. The report indicates that there is little basis for believing that substitution between types of media will offset any negative effects from concentration in a specific medium. The FCC studies also neglected to consider the extent to which ownership concentration may affect the ability of various interest or political groups to reach a wider public with their views. This is an extremely important issue in a democracy.

Project for Excellence in Journalism News Ownership Study

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<http://www.journalism.org/resources/research/reports/ownership/default.asp>

In February 2002, the Project for Excellence in Journalism released the results of the largest examination ever undertaken of local television news in the United States to deconstruct what local TV news offers citizens and to examine what kind of content viewers preferred. The analysis was an examination of the tendencies of ownership structures. The findings - an analysis of 172 newscasts, some 23,000 stories, over five years - suggest that ownership type does make a difference. Among the findings:

- 1)Â Â Â Â Â Smaller station groups overall tended to produce higher quality local newscasts than stations owned by larger companies-by a significant margin.
- 2)Â Â Â Â Â Network affiliated stations tended to produce higher quality newscasts than network owned and operated stations-also by a large margin.
- 3)Â Â Â Â Â Local ownership offered some protection against newscasts being very poor, but did not encourage superior quality.

Project for Excellence in Journalism/Pew Survey

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<http://www.journalism.org/resources/research/reports/fccsurvey/default.asp>

In February 2003, the Project For Excellence in Journalism, in collaboration with the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, released the results of a poll documenting the frightening fact that the great majority of Americans, 72 percent, have heard nothing at all about the current FCC media cross-ownership debate and that only 4 percent of Americans had heard a lot about the issue.

When people as divergent as William Safire and Jackson Browne, and groups as diverse as Code Pink and the National Rifle Association all see danger in these changes, it is, at least, an indication that more thought, study, and comment is needed.

We strongly urge you to give the public a true voice in these policies, which will forever alter the way citizens receive their news, information and entertainment.

Sincerely,

Eileen Brokaw

Mark C. Falbo